Amazon unveils effort to develop original TV shows

Alistair Barr, Reuters

(Reuters) - Amazon.com Inc unveiled a new effort to develop original comedy and children's TV shows to distribute over the company's video streaming service.

The move is part of a broader push by Amazon to produce its own content, including video and e-books, to sell to its millions of customers over the Internet.

The world's largest Internet retailer said people will be able to submit ideas for television series to the website of its Amazon Studios unit. Amazon said it will option one new project per month and add it to a development slate where it will be tested for viability with an audience.

Amazon has been spending heavily in recent quarters to add movies and TV shows to its video streaming business, increasing competition with Netflix Inc.

However, both companies are also working on producing their own content from scratch to reduce reliance on big movie studios and TV production companies, which want to be paid well for their work.

Amazon Studios, which was launched in November 2010, accepts movie scripts and asks customers to review the ideas online, using the feedback to choose which project should go ahead.

The unit has received more than 700 test movies and 7,000 scripts so far, and 15 movie projects are under development.

The new focus on TV shows broadens this effort. Amazon said on Wednesday that the TV series project is led by Joe Lewis, previously with 20th Century Fox and Comedy Central, and Tara Sorensen, who came from National Geographic Kids.

Within 45 days of getting pilot TV scripts, Amazon said it will either extend an option on the project for $10,000 or ask the creator to put the idea on the Amazon Studios website.

If the company decides to distribute a full-budget series, the creator will get $55,000 and up to 5 percent of Amazon's net receipts from toy and T-shirt licensing, and other royalties and bonuses, the company said.

(Reporting By Alistair Barr; Editing by Maureen Bavdek and Richard Chang [1])

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